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ABSTRACT

In the summer of 1995, the Toronto Board of Education implemented its New Expanded Opportunities Summer Program in order to provide the best support possible, and the most effective use of students summer school time. This report outlines data from surveys disseminated to 415 students and 48 teachers during the final week of summer school. Survey results showed that summer school students, particularly those in grade 9, had positive attitudes about the program. Over three-quarters found the program helpful in improving literacy and numeracy skills. The majority also believed they would do better in reading, writing, and math the following year. Grade 9 students were more positive about the program than grade 8 students. Teachers surveyed named several features of the program that were positive, including administrative and staff support and, in some cases, small class size, while difficulties perceived included larger class sizes, the program's short timeframe, problems with student assessment profiles, the registration process, and lack of materials and resources. Despite problems, most teachers (97%) would like to see the program continued. Suggestions for further study included analyzing why grade 9 students were more positive than grade 8 in their assessments of the program. (BGC)

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THE NEW EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES SUMMER PROGRAM, 1995

STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

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THE NEW EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES SUMMER PROGRAM, 1995: STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

January 1996

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&
Maria Yau

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Executive Summary

About 760 (14%) of the 1994-95 Grade 9 students and 128 (4%) of the Grade 8 students were registered in the New Expanded Opportunities Summer Program last year.

The survey results show that these summer students, particularly the Grade 9s, were positive about the program. Over three-quarters found the program helpful in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Between half and two-thirds of the student respondents indicated that they had improved in the frequency/level of reading and in the enjoyment of writing and math since their enrolment in the summer program. The majority also believed that they would do better in reading, writing, and math the following year.

Summer program teachers who were surveyed estimated that the program has helped more than half of the students in terms of reviewing, reinforcing and practising the students' basic skills. Elementary teachers were more likely than secondary teachers to perceive the program being useful for their students.

Teachers identified certain features of the summer program that had enhanced the delivery of the program, namely support from the administrative and other staff, and in some cases, small class size. On the other hand, teachers also mentioned some difficulties, including large class size, coping with a wide range of needs and abilities of students, the short time frame of the program, problems with the Student Assessment Profiles, confusion in the registration process, lack of classroom materials and resources, and heavy work loads. Teachers also made some suggestions about the types of changes or improvement they would like to see.

Despite the difficulties, some teachers found the experience of teaching the New Expanded Opportunities Summer Program satisfactory and rewarding. In fact, most of the teachers would like to see the continuation of the program next summer.

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Introduction

In the summer of 1995, the Toronto Board implemented for the first time its New Expanded Opportunities Summer Program for Grades 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The purpose is to provide "the best support possible and the most effective use of Summer School time for students" who are academically behind during their regular school year. Indeed, for the Grade 9s, the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program was specifically designed for those who have not received 8 Equivalent Credits by the end of their Grade 9 school year.

The Continuing Education Department which organized the program, requested Research Services to monitor the New Summer Program, with a focus on the Grade 9 program. The two departments collaborated in the design and administration of the research instruments. Two surveys were developed to measure student and teacher perceptions of and satisfaction level with the program. While the emphasis of this first year's evaluation was on Grade 9, Grade 8 summer students as well as summer teachers from the elementary panel were also surveyed. In addition, the two reading clinicians who were hired to provide assessment and programming support to the classroom teachers were also requested by Continuing Education to provide feedback about the summer program.

This report summarizes the survey data gathered from the student and teacher surveys during the last week of the summer school, as well as submissions by the Reading clinicians. Student information extracted from the Board's on-line database was also used to provide background information about the summer students.

A. Findings about the Summer Program Students

According to the student course credit records extracted from the Board's central database, approximately one in five of the 1994-95 Grade 9 students had *not* been awarded the 8 Equivalent Credits by June 1995.[1] Among these students, 71% (about 760) were registered in the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program, making up roughly 14% of the Grade 9 population.* On the other hand, the proportion of Grade 8 students who enroled in the Summer Program was small (4%, N=128).

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1. For further information, please refer to the preliminary report on "Grade 9 Completion Rate of Destreamed Decredited Students (1994-95)", Research and Assessment, February, 1996.

* In 1995, the Grade 9 Summer Program was offered in five locations across the city: Western Technical-Commerical School, Harbord Collegiate, Eastern High School of Commerce, Monarch Park Collegiate, and Northern Secondary School.

According to the student survey[2], over half of the Grade 9 summer students enroled in both literacy and numeracy programs, over a third were in the numeracy program only, and 11% in literacy program only. (See Table 1). As expected, most (87%) Grade 8 summer students[3] took both literacy and numeracy in the program.

Table 1: Types of summer program taken by Grade 8 & 9 students

Types of Summer Program taken	Grade 8 (n=93)	Grade 9 (n=322)
Literacy & Numeracy	87%	53%
Numeracy only	11%	36%
Literacy only	2%	11%

Students' assessment of the helpfulness of the program

The majority of the summer students indicated in the survey that the program was either very helpful or helpful, and the Grade 9 students were more likely to say so than their Grade 8 counterparts (85% versus 78%). When asked about specific areas, approximately half of the Grade 8s and 9s indicated that they read *more often* or *more advanced* materials in the summer program than during their previous school year.[4] (See Table 2.) Furthermore, over half of the Grade 8s and nearly two-thirds of the Grade 9s said that they enjoyed writing and math more in the summer program than in their regular school terms.[5] In predicting their own performance for the coming school year, the majority of the summer students were optimistic that they would do better.[6] (See Table 2).

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2. Slightly less than half of the Grade 9 summer students (322) responded to the survey. Two schools did not receive the forms in time to respond. Nevertheless, these respondents did represent those who registered in the summer program in terms of such demographic characteristics as gender, birthplace and first language.

3. The response rate for the Grade 8 students was 74%.

4. For the other half, most felt reading about the same amount or at the same level of reading materials in the summer as in their regular school year.

5. For the other students, they either indicated that they still did not enjoy the subjects, or they did not enjoy writing or math in the summer.

6. For most other students, they were not sure how well they would perform in their following school year.

In terms of racial differences, Black students in both grades were more likely than other groups of students, to show that they enjoyed the courses in the summer, and to predict better performances in the coming school year as a result of the program. On the other hand, Asian students as a whole (particularly the Grade 8 summer students) were comparatively less positive about their reading and writing in the summer, and less likely to say that they would do better next year in their literacy areas. (See Table 4). While White students' overall assessment of their own summer and future performance was in between the Asians and Blacks; among themselves they were clearly more optimistic about their future performance in literacy skills than in numeracy skills.

Table 4: Students' self-assessment and perceptions by race

Student Assessment & Perceptions	Grade 8 (n=93)						Grade 9 (n=322)					
	Asian	vs.	Black	vs.	White		Asian	vs.	Black	vs.	White	
About reading, writing, and math in the summer												
Read more often/more advanced materials	34%	vs	57%	vs	52%		44%	vs	60%	vs	49%	
Enjoy Writing more	40%	vs	57%	vs	63%		56%	vs	67%	vs	65%	
Enjoy Math more	47%	vs	62%	vs	50%		69%	vs	60%	vs	60%	
About reading, writing, and math for the next school year												
Will do better in Reading	48%	vs	93%	vs	61%		70%	vs	87%	vs	82%	
Will do better in Writing	54%	vs	86%	vs	68%		74%	vs	80%	vs	82%	
Will do better in Math	60%	vs	56%	vs	53%		67%	vs	88%	vs	65%	

Students' likes and dislikes about the summer program

From the open-ended responses, students elaborated on what they found most liked/helpful and most disliked/least helpful about the program. Students comments were generally positive, especially about the teaching and learning activities in class. (See Table 5).

Table 2: Students' self-assessment and perceptions of the summer program

Student Assessment & Perceptions	Grade 8 (n=93)	Grade 9 (n=322)
Summer Program helpful	78%	85%
About reading, writing, and math in the summer		
Read more often/more advanced materials	46%	51%
Enjoyed writing more	53%	62%
Enjoyed math more	53%	63%
About reading, writing and math for the next school year		
Will do better in reading	65%	79%
Will do better in writing	65%	80%
Will do better in math	57%	68%

More detailed analyses further show that, within each grade, there were some variations in the ways students responded according to their gender and race. For example, a consistently larger proportion of Grade 9 males than females estimated that they would do better in all three areas in the coming school year. Such gender variations were, however, not as apparent among the Grade 8s. (See Table 3).

Table 3: Students' self-assessment and perceptions by gender

Student Assessment & Perceptions	Grade 8 (n=93) Female vs. Male	Grade 9 (n=322) Female vs. Male
About reading, writing, and math in the summer		
Read more often/more advanced materials	43% vs. 48%	55% vs. 47%
Enjoy Writing more	50% vs. 55%	60% vs. 63%
Enjoy Math more	53% vs. 53%	59% vs. 65%
About reading, writing, and math for the next school year		
Will do better in Reading	61% vs. 68%	76% vs. 80%
Will do better in Writing	68% vs. 63%	72% vs. 85%
Will do better in Math	56% vs. 59%	62% vs. 71%

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Table 5: Students' likes and dislikes about the summer program

Students' likes and dislikes about the Program (N=415)		
TOPICS	**LIKES/ most helpful**	**DISLIKES/ least helpful**
1. Certain components of numeracy class e.g. additions, subtractions, fractions, reviews	34%	11%
2. Certain components of literacy class e.g. spelling, grammar, reading, writing, vocabulary, illustrating	33%	17%
3. Teachers' skills and personalities e.g. explanations of concepts, effort, attitude and friendliness (good vs bad)	29%	6%
4. Projects/research, amount of work (appropriate amount vs too much or too little)	10%	17%
5. Length of class (appropriate length vs too long or too short)	9%	6%
6. Redoing old math (easy to learn vs no challenge)	9%	8%
7. Mandatory nature of the enrolment for students who failed	7%	1%
8. Spelling and math tests	7%	4%
9. Interest level of class (fun vs boredom)	6%	2%
10. Class size (small vs large)	4%	1%
11. Scheduling (classes to begin at 8:30)	1%	9%
12. Length of class (appropriate length vs too long or too short)	.5%	.5%

B. Findings about the Teachers in the Summer Program, 1995

Towards the end of the summer program in 1995, all teachers from Grades 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were asked to describe their experiences and perceptions about the program through a survey form. A total of 48 forms were returned, representing a response rate of 94%.[7] (See Table 6.) There was a fairly even distribution of teachers (about 20%) from each of these grades in the sample.

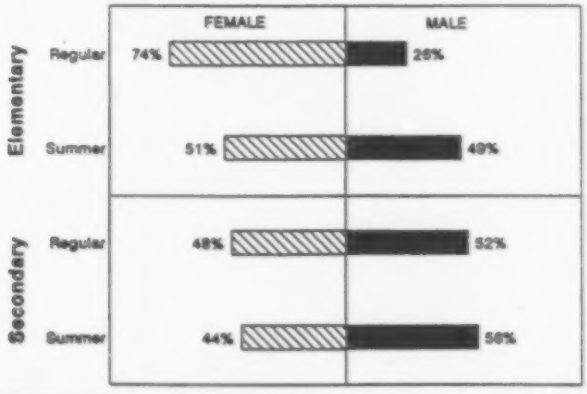
Table 6: Response rates of summer teachers

Grade Level	Teachers who received the survey	Teachers who responded	
Elementary	40	39	98%
Grade 9	11	9	82%
Total	51	48	94%

Background information about the summer teachers

In the elementary panel, the almost even split of male (49%) and female (51%) teachers in the summer school was not typical of the gender distribution in the regular elementary programs where female teachers (74%) outnumbered males (26%) considerably. (See Figure 1). However, in the secondary panel, the percentage of male (56%) and female (44%) Grade 9 summer teachers resembled quite closely the gender distribution of teachers in the regular school year (52% male vs 48% female).

Figure 1: Gender distribution of summer teachers



7. The total number of Grade 9 teachers employed in the summer program was 16, but 5 teachers did not received the survey forms on time before the end of summer school.

The subject areas they taught in the regular school are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Subjects taught in the regular school by summer teachers

Subjects taught in Regular School	Elementary (N=34) Percent	Secondary (N=9) Percent
All subjects or most subjects	47%	11%
English /ESL	18%	44%
Math/Science	24%	33%
French	18%	11%
Other	29%	33%

* The percentages add up to more than 100% because some of the teachers indicated that they teach more than one subject areas.

The average years of teaching experience are 17 years for the elementary teachers and 12 years for the Grade 9 teachers. Table 8 shows that the majority (67%) of Grade 9 teachers reported having only 1-5 years of experience in contrast to only 32% of the elementary teachers. The majority of these teachers from both panels (87% and 89%) have had prior summer school teaching experience.

Table 8: Years of prior teaching experience

Years	Elementary (N=38)	Secondary (N=9)
1-5	32%	67%
6-15	18%	0%
16-25	18%	11%
26-35	29%	11%
36+	3%	11%
Average	17 years	12 years

Almost all (8 out of 9) Grade 9 teachers taught 4 classes each in the summer. On the other hand, almost all (38 out of 39) teachers in the elementary grades taught only one class in the summer program.

Table 9 shows the average class size of the summer teachers by grade ranging from 13 to 20. Interestingly, the lowest and highest grades (3 and 9) had the smaller average class size, while Grades 6, 7 and 8 tended to have larger classes.

Table 9: Average class size of summer program

Grade Level	Average Class Size	Range
3	14	9-22 (N=11)
6	20	13-28 (N=7)
7	19	14-29 (N=8)
8	17	12-38 (N=10)
9	13	9-30 (N=9)

Teachers were asked to check off the strategies they employed in the delivery of the Summer program.[8] Their responses are shown in Table 10 and strategies that are most and least commonly used are highlighted.

8. These survey items on strategies were adapted from those developed in Improving Outcomes for All Students: A Handbook for Planning Outcomes-Based Programs, The Metropolitan Toronto School Board (1995), pp.29-30.

Table 10: Strategies employed by summer school teachers in their program delivery

STRATEGIES	ELEMENTARY (N=39)	SECONDARY (N=9)
Organizational		
Grouping/regrouping of students for specific purposes	90%	78%
Giving differentiated homework that may include review, drill, and extensions	72%	67%
Using lesson summaries	64%	56%
Having students evaluate the Summer Program that they enrolled in	54%	78%
Using students portfolios for key cross-curricular outcomes	54%	44%
Using learning checklists	49%	22%
Sign-off sheets for attendance	44%	44%
Sign-off sheets for homework	23%	56%
Sign-off sheets for study skills	13%	33%
Team-teaching with reading clinician and/or special ed. teachers	8%	22%
Instructional		
Assigning tasks or projects tailored to different learning styles	90%	78%
Mentoring, peer-tutoring, or co-operative group learning	87%	78%
Providing context for what is being taught	85%	100%
Allowing time for reflection about concepts and application	77%	78%
Teaching students organizational skills, note-taking skills, etc.	74%	89%
Conferencing	72%	78%
Using a variety of resources, e.g. print and audio-visual resources	56%	44%
Modeling of processes and outcomes by teacher	54%	78%
Giving independent study assignment	46%	33%
Teaching of language specific to subject area, e.g. passive voice for science lab reports	28%	33% 33%
Using planners by students for learning, study and homework	26%	22%
Assessment		
Using clear written statements and examples of what is expected	87%	100%
Close monitoring of students' learning skills through checklists	54%	67%
Teaching of self- and peer-assessment and evaluation skills	54%	56%
Having students monitor their learning skills at home	13%	0%

A number of teachers commented further on their classroom strategies. The following are some quotes about the topic:

> *I find the teaching of the specific steps in completing assignments and discussing and practicing different types of questions very effective. (elementary teacher).*

I also used anecdotal note keeping and work folders to review daily and weekly Benchmark Language/Math tasks and concepts; intense phonics, sentence/story composition, back to basics e.g. place value, regrouping. (elementary teacher).

Using an integrated theme based curriculum gave me the opportunity to focus on individual needs. (elementary teacher).

The different strengths and weaknesses in the class allowed for peer tutoring and one to one instruction from the teacher. (elementary teacher).

One to one approach was used as needed for students with highest needs. I also spent much time on writing process and reading. (Grade 9 teacher.)

I used a variety of evaluation to accommodate the different learning styles and individual strengths. (Grade 9 teacher).

Four ACORN computers and two colour printers were used in teaching and supporting math logic, reading skills, number facts and problem solving. (elementary teacher).

I used computer software - "Math Trek", quizzes, mental math, daily homework checks, major tests, daily journals, and daily oral drill. (Grade 9 teacher).

Teacher assessment of the program

When teachers were asked to estimate what proportion of the students had benefited from the summer school, elementary teachers, on average, felt that the program was *helpful* or *very helpful* to 87% of the summer students. On the other hand, Grade 9 teachers felt that the program was useful to 57% of the Grade 9 summer students.[9] (See Table 11.)

Table 11: Teachers' estimates of the proportion of students helped by the summer program

	Teacher's estimate of percent of students helped	
Helpfulness of the summer program to students	Elementary	Grade 9
Helpful/very helpful	87%	57%
Not helpful/not helpful at all	13%	43%

When asked to elaborate on the usefulness of the summer program, teachers from both panels found that it had helped students to build, review, reinforce, relearn, consolidate, integrate, extend, and practise their basic skills.

9. See the teachers' quotes in the section about students who are not likely to benefit from the summer program.

The following is a summary of the teacher comments:

It provided students with reteaching and review of learned skills. It helped consolidate their weaker skills. (elementary teacher)

The program was a continuation of basic skills which many of the students need to solidify their understanding of basic concepts. (elementary teacher)

The program was able to reinforce some skills; allowed extra time for practice. (Grade 9 teacher)

It gave them an opportunity to work on their individual weaknesses. (Grade 9 teacher)

Specifically, elementary school teachers found that the numeracy program has helped students in the areas of computational skills, numeral order, number patterns, regrouping, math "short cuts", and problem solving.

Comments from the teachers illustrated how students benefited from the numeracy program:

Students were slow learners - basic math skills very weak. I drilled them constantly - learned something - they left with more understanding than they started with. (elementary teacher).

It was helpful in the fact that concepts in numeracy were learnt and in some cases more firmly established. (elementary teacher).

I think the math review helped to clear what was confusing for students and the drill helped to integrate math concepts. (elementary teacher).

In the area of literacy, teachers felt that "students language - both oral and written have shown marked improvement."

The summer program has helped students in

- reading comprehension skills; (elementary teacher)
- improving their grammar skills; (elementary teacher)
- developing an appreciation for: listening, writing, spelling, structural (grammatical) and progress through music and poetry; (elementary teacher)
- phonics, sentence and story composition; (elementary teacher)
- writing basics and extensions; (elementary teacher)
- creative writing - getting students to write anything from haiku to short stories; (elementary teacher)

- having an opportunity to interact and develop the webbing strategy to organize writing and expand ideas. (Grade 9 teacher)

In addition to the literacy and numeracy skills, five teachers observed that the program had helped students to build up their self-confidence personally and academically, because the program let "students work on difficulties at a pace suitable to the individual".

Three of the teachers said:

Most of the students who attended on a regular basis showed improvements in a) self esteem b) organisation c) skills and d) academics (elementary teacher).

The program is very valuable for student learning and self-esteem (elementary teacher).

As the student self concept improved, their understanding of material also improved (Grade 9 teacher).

Teachers from different grades felt that the program was especially helpful to

- "the at-risk learners to keep them exposed to language and math" (elementary teacher);
- ESL students in improving their English (elementary teacher);
- "students who wanted to be at the summer school" (elementary teacher); and
- "students who were capable but absent frequently [during the regular school year] to have a chance to complete outcomes" (Grade 9 teacher);

Indeed, 10 teachers, mostly from the elementary panel, found the summer students in general quite motivated and committed to learn. They described the students the following ways:

The children were attentive, interested and generally well behaved. (elementary teacher).

Students seemed to attempt to make progress even under difficult circumstances. (elementary teacher).

Most children wanted to be in school and enjoyed learning. (elementary teacher).

Most students in the class were eager to improve their skills. (elementary teacher).

I am impressed by the enthusiasm of the active learners and their diligence. (elementary teacher).

It was a pleasant group that knew they have some weak areas and wanted to learn. (elementary teacher).

Most students were very nice and gave a lot to the learning environment, making the classroom a pleasant learning experience for both others and myself. (Grade 9 teacher).

However, teachers from all grades also identified certain groups of students who were *not* likely to gain from the summer program, namely:

- students who needed constant individual attention because they were significantly below age/grade level in literacy and numeracy,
- students who had behavioural/discipline problems,
- students who had attitudinal problems,
- students who did not want to be there,
- students who suffered from chronic absenteeism, and
- students who sought further enrichment but not "expanded opportunities".

Almost half (22) of the teachers, proportionately more Grade 9 than elementary teachers, further pointed out the mismatch between the types of students registered in the program and the kinds of support offered by the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program.

Far too many students came here for attendance/attitude problems (as seen by home school). I was unable to help those who really needed it (i.e. reading below grade 6, 4 or 3 levels due to high numbers. (Grade 9 teacher).

Having students who simply did not attend last year or wouldn't work really was my greatest difficulty. They did not need remediation and were bored. I tried to meet their needs but it made the experience really tough. (Grade 9 teacher).

Most of my students did not have academic problems, and in the short time we had together I was not able to address the other types of difficulties they have. (Grade 9 teacher).

Having to put up with behaviour problems - no recourse. I had to keep all my students regardless mainly due to low numbers!! This was appalling! It benefited no one! (elementary teacher).

I found that those that came with poor attitude did not complete work assignments and were away frequently as well as being disruptive by constant talking. (elementary teacher).

Certain students did not want to be here and should not have been here. At times it was difficult to generate discussion in this group. (elementary teacher).

Summer school is viewed by students as punitive. Such negative feelings tend to slow progress. (Grade 9 teacher).

Some students were sent for science reasons. We did not teach science. (Grade 9 teacher).

Some 50% of my students, I am sure, had A/A+, or at least B's, in English and or Math. Some were in gifted programs! Why are they attending summer school? (elementary teacher).

Teacher satisfaction

Despite the difficulties and challenges encountered by some teachers, there were teachers who found satisfaction from teaching the summer students. To them, "The summer program is beneficial to both kids and teachers."

The following are quotes from these teachers:

Seeing the lights turning brighter "I can do that" - seeing a "non-reader" recognize words - then able to write a short sentence independently. (elementary teacher).

It is wonderful to see the progress in some students in 3 weeks!!! (elementary teacher).

Over the month I saw enormous growth and improvements in each students academic skills, confidence and social skills. I think that the students benefited from working with others with similar learning challenges. (elementary teacher)

Opportunity to help kids who wanted it. Enjoyed one on one opportunity. (elementary teacher).

A wonderful experience! Freedom, within designated parameters to teach creatively, with very gratifying results. (elementary teacher).

An opportunity to work with new teachers and new students at another school is a satisfying experience. (elementary teacher).

The interaction with the students and the satisfaction of knowing that the students had learned something. (Grade 9 teacher).

It was the best teaching experience of my life after 28 years of teaching - very small and student centered classes! (Grade 9 teacher).

I believe our program was very successful this summer - it has truly helped and expanded opportunities for success for many students. (Grade 9 teacher).

The quality and quantity of work produced by many students showed that they made good use of their opportunity. (Grade 9 teacher)

Program features that teachers liked

Support from the administration and other staff

In the survey, seven teachers commented on the usefulness of support from the administrative staff, other teaching staff and student teachers. The reading clinicians also recorded the teachers' appreciation of the support they received from the special education consultants and reading clinicians.

> *The support provided by the school administration was much appreciated. (Grade 9 teacher).*
>
> *Needs (space and materials) were quickly met. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *The many visits from lead teacher to check on the program were useful. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Being able to work with OISE teachers to provide as much individual attention as possible truly made a difference. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *The teachers in the Jr. Basics Program were most helpful. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Wonderful help from U of T students!! (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Thanks goodness that the Faculty of Ed. people participated part of the time for back-up! (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Teachers were welcoming and appreciative of materials and suggestions especially those with students who had reading difficulties. (reading clinician).*

Class size

As reported earlier that there were great variations in class size in the summer program, which have become a source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for teachers from different grades. For teachers who perceived their class size as small, 10 of them made positive comments about how the small class size has contributed to their good experience with the program:

> *The program was helpful because it was apparent that a small classroom of 20 (18 per day) helped those who normally would be lost in the crowd. Several of these students that I taught are non-verbal shy. It gave them an opportunity to answer questions and be called upon to do so often. Comprehension was done regularly as was spelling and grammar of which the majority had trouble with. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *The small group situation allows me to devote more attention to areas of concern. (elementary teacher).*

Teachers' likes, dislikes and suggestions for the summer program

In addition to their general impression about the effectiveness of the program for students, teachers (through their survey) and reading clinicians (through their observation) identified several aspects of the summer program that they liked, areas that they had difficulties with, and suggestions for improving the program. (See Table 12 for the location of the various topics).

Table 12: Teachers' likes, dislikes and suggestions for the summer program

	Teachers' Likes, Dislikes and Suggestions		
Program Features	**Likes**	**Dislikes**	**Suggestions**
Administrative and staff support	p.16	p.20	-
Class size	pp.16-17	p.17	pp.21-22
Coping with the wide range of student needs and abilities	-	p.17	-
Recruitment and screening process	-	-	pp.22-23
Registration/enrolment	-	pp.19-20	p.23
Student Assessment Profiles	-	p.19	pp.24-25
Resources/supplies	-	p.18	pp.23-24
Time constraints/program length	-	pp.18-19	p.24
Workload	-	p.20	-
Others	- - -	Student evaluation - p.21 Physical environment - p.21 Miscellaneous - p.21	Student grouping - p.25 Staff issues - pp.25-26 Miscellaneous - p.26

I had smaller number than last year and also students from one grade level only made it easier to plan lessons. (elementary teacher).

The small class size I had has given me many opportunities for one-to-one contact and individual programming. It is highly effective and compensates for time constraints. (Grade 9 teacher).

Program features that teachers had difficulties with

Class size

Among teachers who perceived their class size as large, 8 of them indicated in the survey that class size was an obstacle that had hindered them from helping the students effectively. The following is a sample of what they said:

Large class size makes it difficult to help LD or slow learners. (elementary teacher).

Too many students to make this a literacy course! (Grade 9 teacher).

Class sizes were way too big - 20 to 30 students per class makes it impossible to provide the time necessary for each student. Working with students on an individual basis was impossible. Many students were not only [ilnumerate] but also illiterate which greatly impairs their mathematical learning. This is even magnified in large class sizes. Most students do not have class sizes this large during the regular year, let alone with all their needy peers. (By needy, I mean both academic and behaviour). (Grade 9 teacher).

Teachers expressed concerns about the number of students per class. (reading clinician).

Wide range of student needs and abilities

Eighteen teachers from both panels expressed their concerns in the survey about coping with the wide range of needs, skills and ability levels of their students. Such concerns were also confirmed in the report of the reading clinicians. In their words:

There was huge disparity in terms of why students were referred - they range from behaviour /attendance problems to truly weak math skills. (Grade 9 teacher).

Ability levels are just too far apart for a lot of meaningful learning to take place - behavioural and academic difficulties. (elementary teacher).

The range in performance levels was huge. (elementary teacher).

Some students were below expected levels due to lack of skills, while other students were below expected levels due to lack of application/attendance. (reading clinician).

Resources/supplies

Twelve elementary teachers in the survey as well as the reading clinicians in their report mentioned the lack of texts, supplies, resources and materials for delivering their program:

> *We know that active learning needs a variety of materials and it would have been nice to order what you needed. I had to go out and buy materials as I was not in my own [regular school] classroom.*
>
> *Resources are minimum so I had to develop my own (which is ok!)*
>
> *Lack of materials - math books (had to depend on photo-copied material).*
>
> *The lack of resources - no access to texts, and other resources available (i.e. there were computers locked up in a cupboard in the classroom.)*
>
> *Most teachers lacked materials for students at lower reading levels which limited their ability to address students' needs. (reading clinician).*

Time constraints

Almost half (22) of the teachers in the survey said it was a challenge to meet the many expectations of the program within a very short time frame. They felt that there was just too little time to assess the students' needs, develop an effective program, interact with students meaningfully and accomplish the work required. Some perceived the expectations of the Board, the home schools and the regular school teachers (as indicated in the Student Assessment Profiles) unrealistic or too high. In their words, it is impossible "to squeeze so much learning into so little time." The reading clinicians also noted this kind of concerns expressed by teachers.

> *No time to help the high need students. It is impossible to help 18-20 students at a time! This leaves approx. 3 minutes per day per student over an 18 day program!! Can you address literacy in 54 mins.? (Grade 9 teacher).*
>
> *Too short a time to cram basic math skills, writing skills into 4 short weeks. Not enough time with the children I had. They were good solid workers, only slow starters. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Nineteen days, three hours a day was not enough to cover the variety of difficulties. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Spending first week and a half testing skill levels and where to take students' individualized programs. Then basically three weeks until the end. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *I planned quite a lot of work. Due to their slow tendencies, stressing basic math skills and sentence writing, I could not finish everything I planned. List of priorities came first. (elementary teacher).*

It was a challenge to define and then quickly design an effective programme for each child. (elementary teacher).

Time is not sufficient to focus well enough on individual needs without extra help. (elementary teacher).

Many teachers recommended remediation in too many areas - had to focus on only a few due to time constraint. (elementary teacher).

Student Assessment Profiles

According to the reading clinicians, a few teachers liked the idea of Student Assessment Profiles; but nine teachers in the survey and also a few in the clinicians' report mentioned the difficulties they had encountered with the Profiles. In some cases, the Profiles were missing. In other cases where the Profiles were available, teachers found very little useful information. In their words:

I never received over 70% of the profiles for my students! (elementary teacher).

It is difficult to interpret priority sheet comments without talking directly to the teachers who wrote them. (elementary teacher).

The summer school profiles are not detailed enough and are often filled out poorly. (Grade 9 teacher).

The profiles are incomplete, vague, and sketchy for the incoming students. (Grade 9 teacher).

The profiles were essentially useless in many cases because of the lack of clear expectation for students from their home schools. (Grade 9 teacher).

Comments [in the profiles] are often too general - need to be specific. (reading clinician)

Some teachers did not have the profiles in their hands until the end of the first week. (reading clinician)

Registration/enrolment

Ten elementary teachers found the registration/enrolment process and the start of summer school confusing and disorganized. The following comments are a sample of their survey responses:

There was confusion over pre-registration. Continuing Ed. changed their position in not accepting pre-registered students.

Confusion over supplies - room permits - pre-registration- cut off date.

Parents did not know where to come the first day.

The first day was chaotic - no classrooms opened, no supplies etc.

Changing classes after a week was disruptive.

There was no key for door to room.

Workload

Nine teachers expressed concerns about the heavy workload of the summer program in the survey.

> *As for teaching workload - very heavy with regards to daily marking, quizzes, check lists, tests, homework, oral, individual, etc etc. due to the large numbers of students per day. (Grade 9 teacher).*
>
> *Too little time, too much paper work. (Grade 9 teacher).*
>
> *Pay and actual hours worked do not take this into consideration. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Report cards (too overwhelming given limited time to be with children). (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Filling out the assessment profiles take up a lot of times. I wonder if they will be reviewed. (elementary teacher).*

Lack of staff support

The unavailability of assistance from the administrative and other support staff has created difficulties for a few teachers. Two of them mentioned it in the survey this way:

> *No support in crisis situations as I am located in a high school. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *Being alone, would need more administrative support. (elementary teacher).*

In addition, the reading clinicians reported that some teachers' requests for consultant visits could not be accommodated because "many teachers requested visits during the same time periods."[10]

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10. This is partly because "most teachers did not want to see the consultants in the first week as they needed time to establish their programme and get to know their students".

Student Evaluation

Student assessment was another concern expressed in the survey and the reading clinicians' report.

> *It was decided not to have any formal evaluations. I found it very difficult to report on my students progress objectively. (Grade 9 teacher).*
>
> *Teachers expressed concerns about how they were going to evaluate the students in the course meaningfully - particularly with regards to the profile. (reading clinician).*

Physical environment

Four elementary teacher mentioned problems related to the physical environment of the summer program.

> *There was ongoing construction out of my window (drill) and for a week and half they (played) fixed the fire alarm all morning long. The noise was unpleasant.*
>
> *1. [This secondary school] is too big. 2. Bells ringing during the day. 3. Water being shut off. 4. Washrooms were only available on certain floors! 5. The heat! 6. We were moved from the 3rd floor to the basement and across from our room was the pool - too much noise! 7. More workmen were concentrated in the basement area and at times the language was most inappropriate.*
>
> *Poor accommodation with no ventilation.*

Other issues

Two teachers also mentioned other challenges in the survey, such as:

> *Lack of parent contact. (elementary teacher).*
>
> *It is difficult to overcome the perception that programme is a "day care". (elementary teacher).*

Suggestions for improving the summer program

The following suggestions were made by teachers in the survey and the reading clinicians' report to address the various issues discussed above:

Class size

Eight teachers offered suggestions about reducing class size.

Keep the classes small or the remediation is meaningless. (Grade 9 teacher).

In order to provide optimum help to individuals there should be a cap of 6-8 students per class. (Grade 9 teacher).

Reduce class sizes to 6-8 students. Individual assessment and remediation is extremely limited with current numbers. (elementary teacher).

Maintain small groupings of 10-12! (elementary teacher).

Student recruitment

There were four elementary teachers who felt that more students should take advantage of the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program, especially those from grades 1, 2, 4 and 5.

The summer program turned away needy kids in grades 1, 2, 4-5.

By accepting only grade 3 kids, they have excluded too many "needy" kids.

One shortcoming of the program is the fact that grade 1's and 2's couldn't receive assistance before they got too far behind.

I would have liked to have seen more of the students on the original list in my class. Expanded Opportunity Program offers a wonderful opportunity for at risk students to strengthen and acquire skills in a more intimate atmosphere. It is unfortunate that more students did not take advantage of this time and program.

In addition, eleven teachers made suggestions regarding the recruitment and screening process to ensure that there is a closer match between the needs of the students and the types of support offered by the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program:

Encourage more students to participate by emphasizing the benefits. (elementary teacher).

Make parents aware of the program more directly. Inform parents and students that it is not a baby sitting service, but a place to learn. (elementary teacher).

Let any student who wants to attend do so as well as those identified by their teacher. (elementary teacher).

The program in its existing format should not be for pupils who have learning disabilities - can't really meet their needs with one teacher. (elementary teacher).

Great program! However, students who are behaviour problem during school year should not be here. Waste of time for everyone! (elementary teacher).

More careful screening to limit students to those who are in high need. (Grade 9 teacher).

The screening of the students is needed. Many students should not be admitted if their failure cannot be attributed to literacy i.e. attendance, attitude, work habits. (Grade 9 teacher).

Home schools must not be permitted to send attendance problems or so-called "lazy" students. If they are not experiencing literacy problems, they should not attend! (Grade 9 teacher).

Registration/enrolment

Four teachers in the survey questionnaire and other teachers in the reading clinicians' report offered suggestions related to the registration and enrolment process, such as:

Preregistration although helpful should not be mandatory. (elementary teacher).

Change method of enrolment - many children did not get into program because of late applications. Begin enrolment earlier - accept late registrants if room in class. (elementary teacher).

Try to assemble class lists earlier so that teachers can be more prepared. Inform parents of program details e.g.location, way ahead of time to allow them to plan for transportation, to change vacation times etc. (elementary teacher).

Schools need to receive the information about the Summer School Program well in advance to ensure the deadline date can be adhered to. (reading clinician).

Resources/Supplies

In response to the lack of human and material resources, elementary teachers and the reading clinicians provided the following suggestions:

Teacher aids are needed at the grade 3 level. (elementary teacher.)

More help is needed (i.e. volunteers, even excellent students as peer teachers). The students need a great deal of individual help. (elementary teacher.)

Continue the OISE program. (elementary teacher.)

Host school should leave texts for appropriate grade level (math, language, spelling and guides). (elementary teacher.)

Texts, higher photo-copy allotment, access to school library. (elementary teacher.)

Provide teachers with appropriate materials. For example: book bins containing novel sets, dictionaries, thesaurus, books of high interest but low vocabulary (grade 3 >). (reading clinician).

Increase the number of photocopies. Without texts one sometimes need to rely on copies. Let us have computers in our classrooms. (elementary teacher.)

I feel that individual ordering for classrooms is very important because I used many supplies from my own school. (elementary teacher.)

Support in using the multi-media software and concrete material is needed. (elementary teacher.)

Encourage the use of computers - videos - educational games, artistic technical material (video camera, musical instruments, etc.). (elementary teacher.)

The program should consider using ACORN computers in the future. Computers make learning fun and hide the "work" aspect of learning. (elementary teacher.)

Desks should be appropriate for grade level. (I taught grade 6 in room which was primary -no larger desk provided.) (elementary teacher.)

Length of program/class

Eight teachers suggested extending the class period or the program time frame.

More time should be allocated to teach students. 1 1/2 hrs per day was not enough. (Grade 9 teacher).

Periods should be lengthened to 2 hours. (Grade 9 teacher).

Increase the length of the program - one or two additional weeks would be of great benefit. (Grade 9 teacher).

Student Assessment Profiles /Reporting

Fourteen teachers, mostly from elementary grades, proposed different ways to improve the Student Assessment Profiles and reports. The reading clinicians' report also included two recommendations on this topic. Their comments can be classified as *when* and *how* the profiles/reports should be done and *what* should be contained.

Profiles should be distributed to the receiving teachers prior to the course or on the first day at the latest. (reading clinician).

I would have liked the profiles earlier than the first day of summer school or before summer school. (elementary teacher).

Student profiles should not be done at the same time as regular reports. (elementary teacher).

Referring teachers need adequate time to fill out the profile forms and a check needs to be made to ensure that specific information is provided. (reading clinician).

Try to establish better standards and more specific information on profiles. (elementary teacher).

Profiles must be more detailed, however understandable for lack of information, perhaps a copy of report card can be made available! (elementary teacher).

The profile chart should be changed: concepts are too broad to be relevant to a 19 day program. The teacher may only have time to focus on one or two areas of weakness; thus the chart is not relevant to the program. (elementary teacher).

Profiles should not be that elaborate. Areas of difficulty and levels should be all to be mentioned. (elementary teacher).

Instead of addressing individual needs with student profiles, make a statement as to what will be offered i.e. remediation of math and language skills at certain levels. (elementary teacher).

Devise a way to lessen the reports and time involved. (elementary teacher).

Much reduced reporting mechanism but base (with check marks) on ACFAS. (elementary teacher).

The student profiles need to be redone. They were very inconsistent in terms of information. Special Ed students should be identified so that individualized programming can take place from the start. (Grade 9 teacher).

Student grouping

In the survey and the reading clinicians' report, a few teachers offered some suggestions on the topic of student grouping.

Consider grouping students to facilitate programming in order to meet student needs more effectively. (reading clinician).

The combinations of the grade 6 and 7 students further widen the large range of serious needs. The 7s support would be much more effective if they were separate or perhaps with 8s if necessary. (elementary teacher).

Stream students based on needs and areas of focus to facilitate achievement of outcomes and narrow the range of needs and abilities in a single classroom. (Grade 9 teacher).

Staffing issues

There were several recommendations by teachers from various grades and the reading clinicians on staffing issues. The topics include staff training and development as well as remuneration. The comments were:

The Board may consider having a more comprehensive training session for teachers and providing suggestions for programming etc. and handling diverse academic strengths. (elementary teacher).

Teachers need help to develop a curriculum in meeting the individual needs of an average class of 24 students. (elementary teacher).

Some teachers expressed an interest in learning more about teaching reading. [As well], teachers, whose expertise is in the teaching of literature requested help to address specific reading problems e.g. assessment, and instruction techniques. (reading clinician).

Consider providing in-service to acquaint teachers with specific reading assessment techniques and reading strategies. (reading clinician).

You need to have teachers understand how to fill in the profiles more accurately and to understand this is not for the top students (loved having them). (elementary teacher).

Give teachers an opportunity to work closer together- team teach perhaps? (elementary teacher).

More opportunities for literacy and numeracy teachers to interact - concerning needs of students both academic and personal. (Grade 9 teacher).

Please consider paying us for the extra 2-3 hours (daily) which are spent on preparation of lessons and marking assignments. How can I evaluate students if you do not provide the time. My time does deserve some compensation above what you pay. Please visit my program and see how little time I have in 3 hours to do all the things you require. (elementary teacher).

Other suggestions

There were a few other miscellaneous suggestions made by teachers in the survey:

There should be two course codes with special classes set aside for students who are upgrading in one type of class and needy students in smaller classes. More recommendations are in the Northern S.S. Grade 9 report. (Grade 9 teacher).

School with no air conditioning obviously gets hotter as the day progresses, therefore the earlier the classes begin the better, possibly 8:30 to 11:30 as opposed to 9-12, just a thought. (elementary teacher).

Hold the summer program in smaller schools. (elementary teacher.)

Invite the consultants to the meeting held prior to the course to establish contact and to initiate further meetings. (reading clinician).

Should the summer program continue?

An overwhelming majority (97%) of the elementary teachers felt that the Summer Expanded Opportunity Program should continue in the future. Among these teachers, a few also qualified their "yes" with conditions they thought are necessary to improve the program (e.g. screening students before registration, making classes smaller). Their survey comments about why the program should continue include:

I think that Expanded Opportunity Program offers children who is "at risk" a wonderful opportunity to review and strengthen skills they may be weak in. As a result, these students will enter grade 4, 7 or 8 with a greater chance for success within a normal classroom setting. Students need the support provided by the program in preparation for the next year.

This provides an alternative learning experience for kids with a need for individual input who can really benefit from a supervised program. Great for self-esteem and support with teacher/authoritative figure.

This programme benefits students because even if they don't make great strides they do not lose as much as when they are away for 2 months.

The program helps those with the greatest needs by disallowing the 2 month (forget- everything syndrome) and parents/children will be in on this together. I think it would put more responsibility on family and child to try harder.

The students need the skills acquisition and reinforcement regardless of the terminology written about them.

In the secondary panel, 67% (6 out of 9) of the Grade 9 teachers believed in the continuation of the summer program.

I believe our program was very successful this summer - it has truly helped, and expanded opportunities for success, for many students.

The course can be valuable for students in need of improving reading and writing skills who are below grade level.

Students need the support provided by the program in preparation for the next year.

Two Grade 9 teachers answered "depends" in regards to the continuation of the summer program in the survey with the following comments:

If summer school is to be offered, then credits must be given to each course in the year. Keep the destreaming, it has benefits, but do not decredit the courses. Thus each subject can offer a summer school program. In summary- subject specific classes - credit attachment 1 vs holding back 8. (Grade 9 teacher)

The current 4 period destreamed context with poorly filled out profiles creates an environment which is not very useful for students who are particularly needy. (Grade 9 teacher)

The one Grade 9 teacher who did not think the program should continue did not give any reason; but his other comments on the survey indicated that most of his summer students did not have apparent academic needs. Instead, he found other types of problems that could not be addressed by the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program.

Conclusions

This snap-shot study focuses on the perceptions of students and teachers who participated for the first time in the New Expanded Opportunities Summer Program in 1995. In general, students' and teacher' assessment of the summer program was positive. Nonetheless, numerous concerns and suggestions were expressed, especially by the teachers, that administrators and curriculum staff should take into considerations when planning for their second year summer program.

Furthermore, as a result of the survey, several questions arise that need further research. For instance: Why were Grade 9 summer students more positive than Grade 8 students in their assessment of the program, whereas the contrary was true among the summer teachers, i.e., Grade 9 teachers compared to the elementary teachers were more critical of the summer program?

Finally, it should be noted that this survey represents only one component of a larger evaluation plan for the Expanded Opportunities Summer Program. In order to determine the long-term effectiveness of this new initiative, a longitudinal tracking process is included in which students who participated in the program (especially the Grade 9s) are tracked in each of their subsequent secondary school years according to such indicators as:

- when the 8 Equivalent Credits are granted;
- any extended support required during the regular school year;
- further Expanded Opportunities interventions needed in subsequent summers;
- program placement and/or transfer during their secondary school year;
- enrolment in semestered versus all-year programs;
- number of credits earned after the Grade 9 year;
- average school marks;
- school transfer; and
- school retention (i.e. staying in school).

These tracking profiles will then be compared with the profiles of those who were eligible for Expanded Opportunities but who did not enrol in the program. Part of the tracking process has already begun by the Continuing Education and Research staff, and yearly reporting will be made by the end of each school year.